1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942 ,.
FF52 Nupe FF52

There are three groups of bead-makers, *lantana*, as they are called, in Bida, one in each part of the town. Their work consists in 'refining' the crude or plain beads which are brought into the country from the north by Hausa and Arab traders, that is to say, they polish and sometimes bore these beads and grind them to various new shapes. The grinding and polishing is done on large flat sandstones especially brought to Bida from the river Niger. The grindstones and a few small iron tools for boring represent all the utensils used by the beadworkers; they are comparatively cheap—the grindstones are sold for 1*s.* in Bida—and the full equipment of a worker costs not more than two or three shillings. The beads are finished in different styles according to the nature of the bead and also according to the prevailing fashion and the demands of the market. The following styles of beads are in fashion to-day: long slender round beads, used for the *egbogi*, the chains of beads which the Nupe women wear round the waist; small ball-like round beads, with highly polished surface; and small flat triangular beads, worn as necklaces. The Nupe dislike edged beads and beads with dull surface; beads of this kind are polished and ground down to the desired shape and appearance. The grinding and polishing of the beads is a long and delicate work. The average production per worker is three beads a day. The finished beads are strung on cotton thread and arranged in long chains in which beads of different kinds and styles are often mixed, and are then ready for the market.

The beadworkers have no special workshops, but carry out their craft in the entrance hut of the compound. Four or five men are working in one hut; each man works independently, sitting on the ground behind his grindstone. As in all other crafts, the men who share the workshop are usually close relations who live in the house of which the entrance hut serves as workshop. Occasionally there is a distant relation or a stranger amongst them who lives in another house and comes there only to work. More rarely an individual beadworker who has no relations practising the same profession would work alone in his own house. Traders and buyers, who bring beads to be polished or bored, or who collect the finished article, are constant visitors in the workshops of the *lantana*.

In the economic arrangement which obtains in the Bida beadworking industry the majority of workers are reduced to the position of mere labourers, working to order and paid at a piece-rate. One of the bead-makers in the workshop may act as contractor: he buys the crude beads from the Hausa or Arab trader and has them worked by his fellow workers. He divides the work among them and pays them ½*d.* per bead. The finished chain of beads is entrusted to the wife of the contractor; she will sell it in the market or to one of the traders in beads, who will then 're-export' these products of Bida fashion industry to the north. A chain of crude beads bought for 7*s.* will fetch 10*s.* as the finished article; 2*d.* to 3*d.* go to the woman 'middleman' as commission, and about 1*s.* 8*d.* (for a chain, say, of forty beads) goes to pay the wages of the labourers, so the contractor can make a net profit of 1*s.* 2*d.* on work that took three to four days to complete; the individual labourers make in the same

6: Anonymous U-4 (no date) 1956

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Bida

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Bangles and bracelets of metal and glass, soap spoons of aluminium, all made in Bida

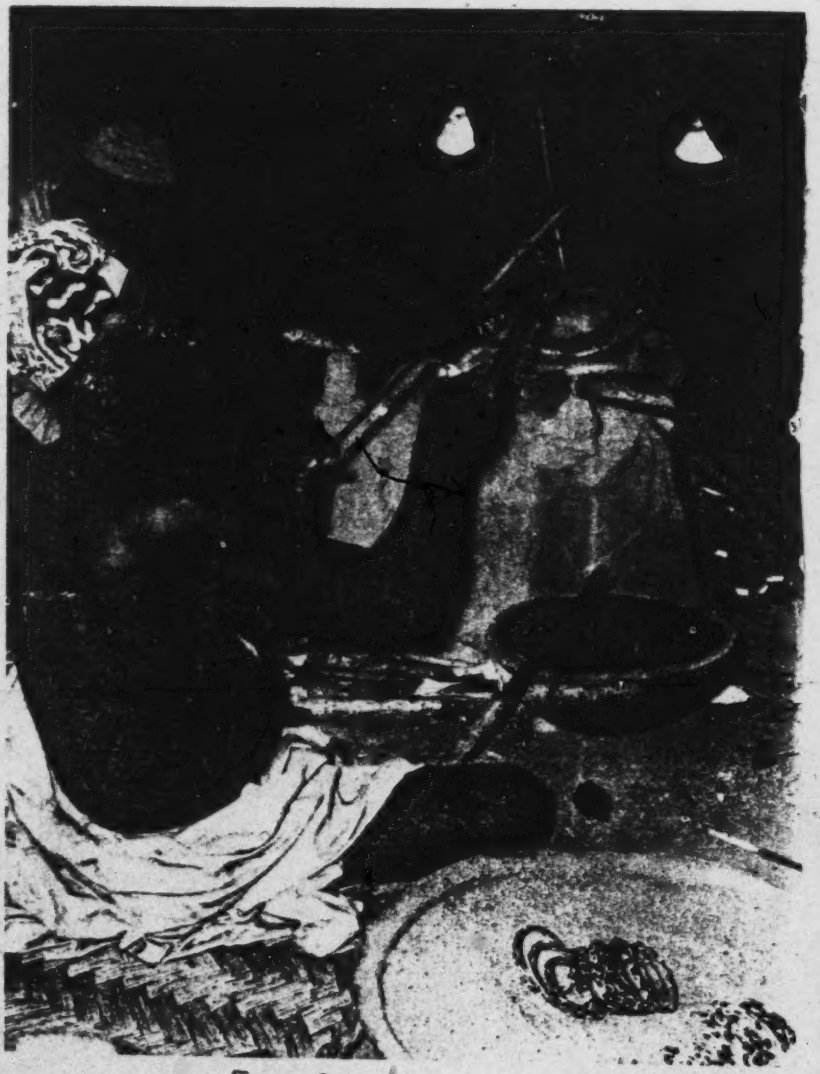
Glass-makers of Bida

6: Anonymous U-4 (no date)1956
FF52 Nupe FF52
Bida

"King of the dancers"—
a Bida brass spinning toy

Making a glass bangle. The bellows man sits
behind the central furnace

323
516
415
301



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6: Anonymous U-4 (no date) 1956
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Bida

Heavy silver bracelets of a type worn by the beauties of Bida for centuries.

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323 with the hands, in an up-and-down movement, for minutes on end with the speed and beat of a slow-running Diesel. The strength and stamina required for this job in the small, round entrance-houses to Bida compounds where these craftsmen work, must be colossal.

The glass-maker himself, a senior craftsman, throws a few handsful of dried wood into the furnace, the pump-man pumps, and soon a metal rod is brought to white heat. The end of this rod is then stuck into a few pieces of broken bottle which are then held in the flame until they begin to melt and become a shapeless but easily-workable mass.

Two rods are then used to separate a small lump of the half-molten glass. The lump is pierced and then waved round and round, still in the flame, until a jointless, glass bangle has been made. White patterns in the glass are made by the addition of white, liquid clay early in the spinning process.

[Text continues on p.142 -- Analyst]